

**Twin Falls District (TFD) and Northeastern RAC
Joint Resource Advisory (RAC) Meeting
June 19, 2008
Cactus Petes, Jackpot NV
Draft Minutes**

June 19-Tour

Attendees:

Twin Falls District RAC Members:

Ken Sanders, Chairman, Category 3
Yvette Tuell, Category 3
Scott Boettger, Category 2
Hank Mayland, Category 2
Mel Quale, Category 1
Joe Tugaw, Category 1
Kevin Bell, Category 3
Marc Brackett, Category 1
Denise Alexander, Category 2
Samantha Anderson, Category 3
Brad Brooks, Category 2

Boise District (BD) RAC:

John Robinson

Twin Falls District BLM:

Jenifer Arnold, Associate District Manager (ADM)
Lori Armstrong, Shoshone Field Office Manager (SFOM)
Mike Courtney, Acting Burley Field Office Manager (BFOM)
Heather Tiel-Nelson, Public Affairs
Beckie Wagoner, District Records
Ester McCullough, Project Manager

Northeastern (NE) Nevada RAC Members:

Vince Garcia, Chairman, Category 3-Native American Tribes
Tom Connolly, Category 1-Federal Grazing
Larry Barngrover, Category 2-National/Regional Environmental (Wildlife)
Les Hansen, Category 2-Dispersed Recreation
Patsy Tomera, Category 3-Public at Large
Neil Franks, Category 2-National/Regional Environmental

Elko District BLM:

Ken Miller, Elko District Manager

Stephanie Trujillo, Northeastern RAC Coordinator
Janice Willard, Wells FO
Derrick Holdstock, Wells FO
Bryon Fuel, Wells FO
Bryan Hockett, Wells FO
Kathy Gunderman, Tuscarora FO
Doug Furtado, Battle Mountain FO
Jill McConville, Battle Mountain FO

RES:

Scott Kringen, Senior Developer
Jack Piatt
Stephen Hartgen
David Young, West Inc.
Aaron English, URS, Boise

Public:

Ethan Asher, Western Watershed Projects
Katie Fite, Western Watershed Projects
Nate Poppino with the Times News

Note to readers: A copy of each attachment listed in the text of, or at the end of these minutes, is on file with the official copy of the minutes in the BLM Twin Falls District Office. Persons desiring to view attachments should contact Beckie Wagoner, (208) 735-2063.

STOP 1- Jackpot Conference Room (Cactus Pete's)

Jenifer Arnold, TFD Associate District Manager, opened the meeting at 10:05 a.m. by welcoming everyone, "A day in the field is equal to 1000 issue papers." Jenifer then discussed how important it is that both RAC's coordinate over proposed projects such as these.

Ken Miller, Elko Field Office Manager, addressed everyone about renewable energy systems. Ken also thanked the RAC and Katie Fite for joining the tour and emphasized the importance of sharing different perspectives.

Scott Kringen, RES Senior Development Manager, thanked everyone for the opportunity to speak and take them on the tour. A PowerPoint overview of the proposed project was given, and questions were answered. The tour departed at 11:30 a.m.

Stop 2- Meteorological Mast., furthest southern location of proposed China Mountain Wind Energy Project.

Scott Kringen, RES:

The purpose of this tower is to measure wind at multiple locations on the tower; the tower is constantly receiving data and reporting it. The tower measures wind direction, wind speed, wind sheer (reflecting the difference at different heights), and turbulence. The towers are solar powered. A good wind speed is 7.5 – 8.5 mph. The wind is measured in 10 second increments. RES looks for an area where the wind comes from the same direction most of the time. Constant directional wind is desired for this type of project.

The towers all have interior equipment, which is either in the top of the tower or the inner walls of the tower. Average towers are 80 meters tall; the towers planned for this area will most likely be 80 meters tall.

The wind speed is what turns the turbines on and off. The speed settings are different as they go down the tower lines. The towers will shut down at 60 mph if the wind is constant. Additional road construction to access the site will be necessary. This road work will be rehabilitated to the standard road, but improved. RES will work with BLM on the road maintenance. There will be 70 miles of roads total; including both new and existing roads. The towers would be brought in on several trucks, there are three sections per tower; blades, cells and tower sections. The turbines can turn 360 degrees.

The majority of the tax revenue base for this project is in Idaho; even though the power is going out to Nevada. Roughly 15-18 technicians will work on the project and occasionally a crane will need to be used. There is a life span of 30 years on the towers. Once that life span is up, the area will either be reclaimed or leased again.

Mitigation measures will be decided after the two year study; the impact is not yet known. Monitoring will continue after the turbines are up and running.

Lunch

Stop 3-, ridgeline

Dave Young, RES:

There are scattered bird survey points at this location. The studies started in June due to snow in the field since late April. They have currently found up to five Golden Eagle nests thus far. The snow will not be a factor in maintaining the roads. There will be approximately six turbines between stop one and two. There will be between 80 - 90 turbines total.

The BLM will examine the additional road management, including off-highway vehicle use as far as keeping people on the roads and not making new campsites. Katie Fite, WWP, suggested that roads be signed to keep people from going off the existing roads and creating new camp sites. Ken Miller, Elko BLM, asked how the RAC envisioned

managing for this type of issues and stated interest in hearing their viewpoints about those issues.

The EIS should be done by approximately 2010. Studies from other similar projects will be used to determine the effects of turbine noise on the wildlife.

Katie Fite asked if an RMP amendment could be made to designate routes and non routes to protect sage grouse and other wildlife habitat.

Ken Miller, Elko BLM, replied that it could be done, but would be complicated.

John Robison, BD RAC, would like to see all the RACs continue to work together for future common projects to ensure there is a net benefit.

Jenifer Arnold, TFD BLM, then thanked everyone for joining the tour, RES for their time and presentations, Beckie, Stephanie, and Heather for putting the joint tour and meeting together. The tour then headed back to Cactus Pete's. Arrived back at 4:00 pm; the tour was adjourned.

June 20 – Business Meeting

Resource Advisory Council (RAC) Members Present and Category Represented:

Larry Barngrover	(2) Wildlife
Sheri Eklund-Brown	(3) Elected Official
Tom Connolly	(1) Federal Grazing
Neil Frakes	(2) Environmental
Vince Garcia	(3) Native American
Jon Griggs	(1) Federal Grazing
Kevin Lee	(1) Transportation/ROW
Patsy Tomera	(3) Public-At-Large
Les Hansen	(2) Dispersed Recreation

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Representatives Present:

Stephanie Trujillo	Resource Assistant, Ely District Office
Ken Miller	District Manager, Elko District Office
Michael Herder	Associate District Manager, Ely District Office
Doug Furtado	District Manager, Mt Wilson Field Office
Jill McConville	Administrative Assistant, Battle Mountain District Office

Twin Falls District RAC Members

Other Attendees:

Ken Sanders	Chairman, Category 3
Evette Tuell	Category 3
Scott Boettger	Category 2
Hank Mayland	Category 2
Mel Quale	Category 1
Joe Tugaw	Category 1
Kevin Bell	Category 3
Marc Brackett	Category 1
Denise Alexander	Category 2
Samantha Anderson	Category 3
Brad Brooks	Category 2

Boise District (BD) RAC:

John Robinson

Twin Falls District BLM:

Jenifer Arnold	Associate District Manager (ADM)
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Beckie Wagoner
Ester McCullough

Acting Burley Field Office Manager (BFOM)
Public Affairs
District Records
Project Manager

8:15 a.m. RAC Chairman Vince Garcia called the meeting to order. Vince welcomed everyone and thanked the Twin Falls RAC for joining the tour and meeting. Everyone introduced themselves.

I. REVIEW & APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

- Review and Approval of Minutes from the Battle Mountain Meeting: approved with Tom and Sheri's changes (given to Stephanie).

- Patsy Tomera motioned to accept the minutes with all the changes; Tom Connolly seconded the motion. All in favor.

II. CHINA MOUNTAIN WIND PROJECT

-Vince Garcia started the conversation by stating that the cultural concerns will be a great issue concerning placement of the towers at the sites that were viewed during the tour of the project area yesterday.

-Larry Barngrover stated that green energy is popular with politicians and that he supports the wind project. Larry said that he is concerned when people state or imply that there are no impacts. There are impacts from these projects. From a wildlife standpoint there are potential issues, we need to keep our eyes open and be discriminatory. Any issues need to be mitigated and we need to be sure that the impacts are as low as possible. Larry also added that we will be better off if the impacts are recognized early on.

-Neil Frakes agreed with Larry's thoughts and stated that he thinks there are impacts with regard to the projects with the new roads, pads, and turbines. Neil added that one large concern is global change. The groundwork has been laid here to minimize the impacts. Neil also stated that there will need to be a lot of monitoring over the project as a whole.

-Les Hansen said that there is not a lot of impacts from this project concerning Off Highway Vehicles (OHV). The downside is that folks may go farther than the road allows. Les added that he supports the project overall.

-Twin Falls RAC member comment: Would like to see the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) before a major decision is to be made. The county would benefit down the road.

-Patsy Tomera stated that she thinks the wind project would be a benefit. Patsy also suggested that the roads in the winter be closed to prevent ruts, etc.

-Ken Miller stated that there is an opportunity out there for OHV, etc, we are asking for a tough job to be done. We are looking for public and other entities help with these possible opportunities. There are opportunities with the wildlife group. Ken added we need to step outside of how we always do business to take advantage of those opportunities.

-Ken Sanders said that he is excited about the opportunities and that OHV is one. The area involved may need some special rules for management. This is a high use area and OHV will be better served by good rule that keep those from doing bad things in the area.

-Katie Fite stated that she appreciated the opportunity to be involved in the tour of the proposed project area. There is still a lot of information that everyone needs to get on all the ramifications that might be involved. The proposed area has very important values that need to be carefully looked at, especially in light of changes that have and will occur in the future. Katie added that there are benefits to this area that would be irreplaceable.

-Sheri Eklund-Brown asked why Katie thought that this area is irreplaceable.

-Katie Fite responded that the Sage Grouse areas are critical there. Katie added that she noticed a lot of Sage Grouse droppings in the area. This area also is a site of a big burn and a lot of habitat was lost, it will take a lot of time to grow back. The burn set back the habitat for a very long time. There is extremely high density of use right in the area that the wind project is proposed. Does BLM want to continue to see Sage Grouse in this area?

-Samantha Anderson said that the fire did impact the area. The grasses have come back and there are wildflowers present. Samantha added that she does not feel that the windmills will have a lot of impact on the Sage Grouse. There are cultural concerns in the area and needs to be protected.

-Vince Garcia said that Sage Grouse is a big issue. Vince expressed that his concern is that there won't be any wind towers if Sage Grouse gets listed.

-Larry Barngrover said that the RAC does consider given circumstances in the environmental assessment for any project that comes along.

-Sheri Eklund-Brown said that these are multiple use lands and are not reserved only for critical use. Sheri added that we need to look at future uses and need to mitigate for those uses.

-Katie Fite said that we need to make decisions about energy in the future. There is a concern of keeping energy in big companies.

-Sheri Eklund-Brown stated that she acknowledged Katie's concerns with big energy vs. other energy companies such as solar.

-Ken Miller asked how do we understand the perspectives of advocates and their point of view? Ken added that he appreciated Katie's concerns regarding big wind energy as opposed to solar energy, etc. Ken also added that we need to take into account all different perspectives.

-Patsy Tomera said that humans will always choose power over wildlife if there is not enough power.

-Vince Garcia added that we need to look at a balance of all users and all habitat.

-Neil Frakes asked how is climate change going to impact Sage Grouse? Neil added that now is the time to address these issues and find alternatives.

-Evette stated that there needs to be a thorough consultation with the tribes. There are very important tribal lands, cultural and spiritual concerns in this area. Evette also encouraged the BLM to coordinate with the tribes.

-Vince Garcia thanked the Twin Falls RAC for joining the Northeastern RAC and for comparing thoughts and concerns regarding the wind project.

-Twin Falls RAC commented that the TAC appreciated the opportunity to be and the meeting and to discuss the wind project.

III. FIRE PROGRAM UPDATE

Battle Mountain District Office- Doug Furtado

The fuels department is averaging 5,000 acres/year. Doing a 2,000-acre thinning in the same area. WUI projects in Gilman Springs and Lida have been planned for 2009.

Battle Mountain is currently undergoing a preparedness review. There was a slight increase in funds for suppression for next year. The challenge that we and many other offices are facing is staffing.

-Larry Barngrover asked if the air tanker base has started yet?

-Doug Furtado replied that the air tanker base is up and running, unsure of the exact locations for all the resources.

-Sheri Eklund-Brown asked whether there was more money for prevention.

-Doug Furtado stated that the fuels budget is down and the severity budget is static.

-Brown asked about resources for fighting fire.

-Furtado answered that we can order more resources as needed.

-Patsy Tomera asked if Battle Mountain had as many acres burn as Elko did last year.

-Doug Furtado replied that Battle Mountain had about 120,000 acres district wide burn last year.

Ely District Office-Michael Herder

As all district offices budget is a concern.

Ely District Office is working on strengthening partnerships. Defensible Space has been one of the highlights that was focused on this year.

There are 9 fuel reduction projects planned for about 14,000 acres. A 1,000-acre stewardship biomass reduction project. The district has six WUI projects planned.

-Neil Frakes asked what the districts are projecting for fire season this year.

-Doug Furtado responded that Nevada is in another drought year. In Battle Mountain District the fuels are dry. Production was low. Conditions are a result of fires. Cheatgrass is a large concern.

-Michael Herder said that the Ely District received about 50-60% of its precipitation. There may be some fuels build up. The district is preparing for the worst, but hoping for the best. The number one priority this year behind human life and safety is Sage Grouse habitat.

-Ken Miller responded that Elko is in a similar situation as Battle Mountain and Ely.

-Sheri Eklund-Brown asked about the priorities for resources. What is the criteria?

-Ken Miller stated that life and property are always the top priority. The sagebrush ecosystem protection would follow in priority level.

-Michael Herder added that the Desert Tortoise habitat is a priority for the Ely District as well.

-Sheri Eklund-Brown asked if older stands of sagebrush would be protected.

-Ken Miller said there are maps that will show us where the top priority is.

-Sheri Eklund-Brown asked if there is a plan for wildfire use in the fire plan.

-Ken Miller stated that suppression is the goal.

-Michael Herder added that the fire use plans need to be well defined and plan for wildfire use in advance. Those are identified in the District plans.

-Doug Furtado said that wildfire use isn't in Battle Mountain's current plan so there is not that option for the district.

- Tom Connolly asked how will the resources be spread out with regard to priority.
- Doug Furtado said that the priority setting is done with regard to what resources are available.
- Michael Herder said that we are all short on resources. We have initial attack teams.
- Ken Miller stated that priority setting is on a case-by-case basis.
- Patsy Tomera asked about the tall stands of sagebrush along highway 278 towards Eureka. They present a fire danger. Are there any plans to make changes in this area?
- Vince Garcia asked how is suppression being addressed in regard to time of initial attack. It seems to be slower then it should be.
- Michael Herder responded that there are two ways we use to enhance response time. We partner with communities and pre-positioning suppression forces. Teams are stationed to high fire prone areas.
- Vince Garcia asked if resources are called in that are not familiar with brush fires or the areas?
- Ken Miller stated that the Northeastern Team has a 92% success rate on initial attack. We have to be aggressive to pursue more assets to improve suppression successes. Local liaisons could be assigned to work with our resource advisors to address local concerns when resources are not from the area.
- Patsy Tomera asked if that are only 11 engines for the 48 million acres statewide.
- Ken Miller replied, yes.
- Patsy Tomera referred to a controlled burn in the Marshes that got away. When others start fires are they held liable for the damages?
- Ken Miller responded that in a fire trespass the BLM has to show real negligence, which is hard to prove.
- Kevin Lee asked how big of an area does the Interagency dispatch cover.
- Ken Miller said that each district has a center to cover their areas. All of the dispatchers coordinate due to overlapping areas.
- Kevin Lee asked how well the coordination effort is.
- Doug Furtado responded that overall the coordination works well.

-Michael Herder added that the Ely District has a dispatch center and they also receive support from the Cedar City, Utah dispatch.

-Tom Connolly stated that he supports initial attack. Considering the supply and demand that there is the agency is doing the best job they can with the resources they have available.

-Sheri Eklund-Brown asked how the public perception could be improved when they see no work being done. Brown also added that overall a good job is being done with the resources available to us.

-Tom Connolly asked if more emphasis is being put on aerial attack equipment.

-Doug Furtado acknowledged the need for more aerial attack equipment.

Elko District Office-Jeff Arnberger

Elko has a service first agreement with the Forest Service to combine suppression efforts. This will reduce some redundant overhead.

Fire engines are fully staffed. The top priority is protection of life and property and then protection of sage grouse critical habitat.

Elko has several fuel projects in the planning process. There is one WUI in the Ryndon/Osino area to protect the community.

Elko is implementing a joint fire sciences project in the Little Owyhee area in conjunction with the Winnemucca District Office. Winnemucca is gathering data to help analyze how we are doing on the ground.

Elko County and Eureka County have received an \$85,000 grant to go towards the volunteer fire department for training gear.

Defensible space was highlighted during wildfire awareness week with public announcements, posters, etc.

Elko is expecting a normal season. We had a dry spring with no grass crop. There is not as many heavy tankers available, there is only one in Nevada.

-Larry Barngrover asked about the type of airplanes that are available.

-Jeff Arnberger said that there are C130's, P 3's, and a National Guard plane.

-Sheri Eklund-Brown asked how coordination and planning is with other districts for resource inventory.

-Jeff Arnberger responded that coordination is very good. We share resources and efforts.

-Sheri Eklund-Brown questioned if you could apply this to GIS data.

-Jeff Arnberger said, yes, we currently do. There is a lot of data available to us.

-Patsy Tomera asked if the price of fuel has any effect.

-Jeff Arnberger confirmed that the price of fuel has a great affect on contracting aviation assets.

-Kevin Lee asked what would the impact be if we lost an honor camp resource such as the Wells camp.

-Jeff Arnberger stated that losing the Wells Camp would have a large impact on had crews available to us. It would cause a possible delay in suppression.

-Lee asked which camp would overall be better for fire fighting to recommend to the state agency.

-Jeff Arnberger responded that he would prefer to keep the Wells Camp. Losing the camp would have and evident impact on us.

-Sheri Eklund-Brown asked who could be contacted to make a recommendation.

-Kevin Lee responded to contact the Department of Corrections.

-Patsy Tomera added that the Carlin crew is a good group.

-Sheri Eklund-Brown asked how are they trained for firefighting.

-Jeff Arnberger explained that they are trained in what certifications they need.

-Sheri Eklund-Brown asked if the crews have to be 18 yrs old to fight fire.

-Jeff Arnberger responded yes. The crews can be 16yrs. to work within the camp and must be 18yrs. to go on the fire line.

-Sheri Eklund-Brown asked Katie Fite how we could partner better to work on fuel projects.

-Katie Fite responded about the fragmentation and loss of land due to uses and mowing decadent sagebrush. Fite added that there is a lot of cheatgrass moving in and that we need to have more consideration of how livestock use will be affected. We need to have more up front commitments on how grazing will be dealt with and then follow through with those commitments.

Public Comment Period opened at 10:00a.m.

-Vince Garcia asked if there were any comments from the public.

-Garcia invited Katie Fite to explain how Western Watershed Projects and the BLM's philosophies can come together to meet all our needs.

-Katie Fite responded that Western Watersheds Project wants to see native wildlife in the west in healthy populations. We have to remove the stress of livestock grazing on the land and set aside land for wildlife use while trying to keep the landscape intact. Western Watersheds provides input to gain a positive change for wildlife, recreation, etc. There should be some balance restored on the public lands.

-Tom Connolly added that there are a lot of alternative uses of the land. Grazing is only one of the useful tools on Nevada lands.

-Vince Garcia stated that he thought that global change will affect how we police the use of the lands.

-A member of the public spoke in support of Katie and what the Western Watershed Projects is doing.

-Vince Garcia expressed the appreciation on the comments received and thanked Katie Fite for attending the meeting and sharing her views with group.

IV. CALIFORNIA TRAILS INTERPRETIVE CENTER UPDATE

-Ken Miller said that the contractor for the trails center is catching up on small items that need to be completed. A fire hydrant still needs to be installed that was omitted from the original plans. A California Trails Day event was held last week. The event was a huge success with over 1,000 in attendance. The center is open for specific events, but not to the general public yet. Interpretive signs and exhibits are being worked on. The county has completed the work on the access road. Have received \$738,000 for inside exhibits and \$200,000 for outside exhibits, and \$198,000 for trail improvements. There is an agreement with the Southern Nevada Conservancy to help manage the business side and to facilitate the activities, purchasing, etc. Opening to the general public is slated for Fall 09' or Spring of 2010.

-Patsy Tomera asked if the last fire affected the trail at all.

-Ken Miller said that the fire did not affect the center or the trail.

-Jeff Arnberger added that Emergency Stabilization & Rehabilitation (ESR) has plans to implement a green stripping to help preserve the trail and center.

V. OHV UPDATE

Ely District Office-Michael Herder

-Michael stated that the update that was sent out is current; there has been no other changes.

The District is working on the Steptoe Transportation Plan.

-Sheri Eklund-Brown asked if there were any problems with trespassing with the public not knowing where the wilderness areas are.

-Mike responded that the area is marked but not marked well. They are making progress and are in the process of hiring a new Wilderness Ranger.

-Sheri Eklund-Brown asked if enforcement would be heavy until the wilderness is properly signed.

-Michael Herder said yes. They will transition from open to limited access on existing roads. The greatest concern was in regards to hunting access.

-Sheri Eklund-Brown suggested that the BLM make that as public as possible so they (the public) are informed.

Elko District Office- Ken Miller

Ken stated that Elko is gathering data on Spruce Mountain; they are unable to wait for it to be addressed in the Resource Management Plan (RMP). Hope to have a draft plan for scooping in February.

Ken also added that the travel management plan will need to be addressed, scooping to occur in 2010.

Battle Mountain District Office- Doug Furtado

Doug stated that Battle Mountain has finalized the Shoshone Mountain OHV Management Plan. Received quite a few comments on the plan. The plan will utilize existing roads that will provide daylong rides without impacts to the area. The decision will grant right-of-way for construction of new trails for OHV.

-Les Hansen asked if there were any issues with the permittee due to the excessive travel in that area.

-Doug Furtado responded no. The Battle Mountain district has worked closely enough with the permittee to satisfy his issues. The office will monitor the use, if a problem occurs then we will go to the next phase.

-Les Hansen asked if there was an agreement with The Ely District and the Battle Mountain District offices to buy a Trailco Cat.

-Doug Furtado said that he did not know the status of the equipment.

-Les Hansen commented that Edward Hines has applied for the RAC position, as he will be stepping down this year.

-Kevin Lee commented that Elko's new version of the Field Managers Report gave off a nice presentation and was easier to read.

Tom Connolly moved the meeting adjourned and the motion was seconded by Les Hansen. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 12:02 p.m.

Minutes by Jill McConville and Stephanie Trujillo